

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Chemical Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 721 Olive Street

not for publication

city, town St. Louis

vicinity of

congressional district #3--Richard Gephardt

state Missouri

code 29

county St. Louis City

code 510

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Melvin Dubinsky, Estate of Harold W. Dubinsky and Alan Pervil

street & number 721 Olive Street

city, town St. Louis

vicinity of

state MO 63101

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Louis City Hall

street & number Tucker Boulevard and Market Street

city, town St. Louis

state MO 63103

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Architectural Survey of the
title Central Business District, St. Louis has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date October, 1975; revised, April, 1977

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.
706 Chestnut Street, #1217

city, town St. Louis

state MO 63101

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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date entered

Continuation sheet Chemical Building, St. Louis Item number 6

Page 1

Missouri State Historical Survey -
1981

State

Historic Preservation Program
Department of Natural Resources
P. O. Box 176
Jefferson City,

MO 65102

Item #9

Bibliography

Brickbuilder 6 (September, 1896): 177.

Bryan, John Albury. "Iron in St. Louis Architecture Between 1800 and 1900."
(Mimeographed.) n.p.: c. 1940.

Condit, Carl. The Chicago School of Architecture. Chicago: The University of
Chicago Press, 1964.

The Inland Architect and News Record 25 (May, 1895): 39.

St. Louis Builder 8 (October, 1901).

Schuyler, Montgomery. "Henry Ives Cobb." Great American Architects Series Number 2.
New York: The Architectural Record, 1896.

Sherer, S. L. "Interesting Brick and Terra-Cotta Architecture in St. Louis. III.
Commercial, Institutional, Etc." Brickbuilder 12 (May, 1903): 100.

Item #10, cont.

south alley of CB 181; thence turning west continue 125 feet along the north wall
of the Chemical Building; thence turning south continue approximately 115 along the
east side of N. Ninth Street to point of origin.

Item #11, cont.

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Historic Preservation Program
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

January 22, 1982
314/751-4096

Missouri 65102

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The 1896 Chemical Building designed by Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb and its 1903 annex designed by the St. Louis firm of Mauran, Russell & Garden to replicate Cobb's oriemed design commands consideration for its distinctive and durable architectural presence on the important downtown St. Louis corner of Eighth and Olive Streets. Both portions of the building were constructed for the Chemical Building Company, formed originally to provide new facilities for the Chemical National Bank but never used for this purpose. A comparison of Cobb's building (Photo #1) and the building as it appears today (Photo #2) reveals the faithfulness of the annex design to the original.

The Chemical Building rises seventeen stories from the street level, where periodic alterations have been made. At the second story wide cast iron panels with Renaissance designs cover the piers and frieze above recessed bay windows. Paired, decorative cast iron brackets (tripled on either side of the major entrance on Olive) support the projecting bay windows which rise from the third through the sixteenth stories. Wide decorative terra cotta bands wrap around the elevations between the third, fourth and fifth stories. Between other stories terra cotta moldings define upper and lower edges of the spandrels and continue across the piers. The fourteenth story is faced with "rusticated" brick and set off by decorative terra cotta bands. The fifteenth and sixteenth stories are given a vertical lift by the omission of horizontal moldings between them. Pilasters with molded capitals terminate in arches at the sixteenth story. Palmettes form the keystones; palmettes are repeated in the spandrels. Above, a projecting cornice edged with copper is surmounted by the original parapet with decorative molding.

The ornamental cast iron furnished by Christopher and Simpson and the terra cotta by Winkle Terra Cotta Company were products of St. Louis' highly developed capacity to manufacture these building materials. Structural steel for the building came from the DePaw Mills of Indiana.¹ Other iron work can be seen at the rear elevation where a staircase housing with stepped windows rises from the third through sixteenth stories in a fashion similar to that of Burnham & Root's Rookery. (Photo #3) The cantilevered iron staircase inside rises compactly in tight turns of the marble stairs. The iron panels above and below the windows are ornamented by double and solo fish patterns. The view of the rear elevations also reveals the use by Mauran, Russell & Garden of doubled windows for the annex. On the "new" west facade, windows appear in the projecting bays of the parapet, which are blind in Cobb's design.

Remodelings have affected only the first story facades, except for the major entrance on Olive marked by two stories of highly polished stone and 1930's stainless steel lettering.

¹John Albury Bryan, "Iron in St. Louis Architecture Between 1800 and 1900," c. 1940 (Mimeographed.) Bryan wrote that the iron work was originally painted to match the brick and terra cotta.

8. Significance

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1896; 1903 **Builder/Architect** Henry Ives Cobb; Mauran, Russell & Garden respectively

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The undulant, red brick and terra cotta Chemical Building built in 1896 from plans by Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb is significant as the outstanding St. Louis example of the Chicago-style oriemed office building and a direct descendant of Holabird & Roche's Tacoma Building of 1886-89 (demolished). The west facade, extended north with a 1903 addition by St. Louis architects Mauran, Russell & Garden, exactly replicated Cobb's design. Distinguished also by rich cast iron ornament now the color of oxidized copper at the first two stories of its facades, the Chemical Building's projecting bays are visible blocks away from its site at the northeast corner of Eighth and Olive Streets. (Photo #2)

In 1875, a four-story store and office building stood on the site of the Chemical Building--evidence of the steady progression of minor commercial building into what had been an upper-middle class residential enclave. This change was hastened by the beginning of construction of the massive Federal Building (St. Louis Old Post Office) in 1876, on the entire block to the west. When the city's east-west rail capability was dramatically enhanced by the completion of the Eads Bridge over the Mississippi in 1874, St. Louis' commercial district (once strung out along the river) began to focus in a cluster in the blocks west of Broadway. Serious investment capital was attracted to a St. Louis no longer so tightly linked to the economically crippled post-war South.

Prominent architects first from the east and then Chicago were invited to design major office buildings worthy of the city's growing prosperity and optimism in this new center of commercial and financial activity. The first of these was the Turner Building, designed in 1883 by the eminent Boston firm of Peabody & Stearns and built immediately north of the Chemical Building site. It was followed by major office buildings by Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge and Adler & Sullivan's Wainwright Building. The sixteen story Union Trust Building, which in 1893 was the giant of the city, occupied the corner site just east of the Chemical Building's site. Cobb's building would be the last designed by prominent architects from outside the city until after World War II.

Though now regarded as one of the gems of the Central Business District, at the time of its completion in 1896 (Photo #1), the Chemical Building was accorded a lukewarm reception by the anonymous St. Louis correspondent for The Brickbuilder who did not even mention architect Henry Ives Cobb by name:

It contains no special features, other than those found in other first-class office buildings. It is seventeen stories high, in what Barr Ferree is pleased to call the degenerate Chicago style; its many angular bays and the numerous ornamented horizontal lines suggest, to use a common expression, that the architect had found "a good thing," and was tempted to "push it along." He has left

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no quiet spot upon which we may rest the eye, and, although we may be awed by its great height we find it lacks the impressive simplicity and imposing grandeur of its less pretentious neighbor, the Union Trust Building....The architect has given us quite a surprise by the use of very vivid red brick and terra-cotta, quite out of the ordinary in this day of lighter colors.¹

Henry Ives Cobb, FAIA, (1859-1931) was born and educated through high school in Brookline, Massachusetts. After travel in Europe he studied engineering at M.I.T. and the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, then entered the architectural firm of Peabody & Stearns. In 1882, he began work in Chicago where he formed a seven-year partnership with Charles S. Frost, continuing on his own in Chicago from 1899 until moving to New York in 1902. Except for the 1884 Chicago Opera House, described by Carl Condit as "one of the triumphs of the early period" of the Chicago School because of its expanses of glass at the first two stories, the work of Cobb's immensely successful practice shows much more interest in the allusive power of historical styles than in the expression of structure and function which pre-occupied many Chicago architects of the late nineteenth century.²

When Cobb's only St. Louis building was completed, the first ground floor tenants were tailors and candy and tobacco shops. Lippe's Oyster and Chop House occupied the basement. Nelson C. Chapman, wealthy scion of a lumber baron and a co-owner of the building, was one of the first tenants. (Henry Ives Cobb was listed in 1901 as one of the seven owners of the building, but it is not known if he was one of the original investors.) Insurance companies and law firms provided the bulk of tenants along with several architects including John Laurence Maura (Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge's St. Louis partner, and soon to marry Chapman's niece) on the sixteenth floor.

In 1901, the St. Louis Builder announced that plans had been made to raze the Turner Building and replace it with an annex to the Chemical Building.³ The passing of the Turner Building was mourned by architectural critic S. L. Sherer in The Brickbuilder in 1903:

The first of our modern fireproof office buildings, its beauty has not saved it from falling a victim to the inexorable demand for light. It is unfortunate that so beautiful and interesting a structure should disappear from view, for the educational influence of such a monument is beyond computation in money.⁴

The problem of blockage of light and air by the new skyscrapers was addressed by a new building code in 1897 which set 150 feet as the limit for new construction--a limit already exceeded by the Chemical and Union Trust Buildings. Early in 1902 drawings were prepared for an addition by Maura, Russell & Garden (formed in 1900 by Maura and Ernest J. Russell and Edward G. Garden of his Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge staff). Originally planned as an eight story building to take up only half the depth of the Turner lot, a change was announced in the July, 1902 Builder:

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The increased capital and the granting by the Board of Appeals of a permit for the erection of a 16 story annex to the Chemical Building will insure a magnificent addition to the group of office buildings within a stone's throw of the Federal Building.⁵

A c. 1925 photograph provides a close-up view of the cast iron and terra cotta of the first three stories with the virtually seamless Mauran, Russell & Garden addition and the bustling street life of pre-Depression St. Louis. (Photo #4) St. Louis' diversified economic base helped it weather the Great Depression better than many cities but private development downtown ceased and did not resume until the 1960's. That same decade saw the demolition of twenty downtown buildings; many were replaced by garages or surface parking lots. Even the Old Post Office and the Wainwright Building narrowly escaped the headache ball.

The first professional architectural survey of the downtown, completed in 1975, identified many remaining buildings of outstanding merit including the Chemical Building. In 1976, it was designated an official City Landmark.

Of the ground floor shops of today's Chemical Building, only the cigar and tobacco shop at 723 Olive retains the character and aroma of the late nineteenth century. Occupants of the shop since at least 1900, Moss & Lowenhaupt's name is etched in the glass of the mezzanine above the shop, now concealed behind a neon sign of 1940, and appears also on bronze panels in the recessed entryway to the shop with its pressed tin ceiling and wood cabinets. The shop also boasts the building's only remaining canvas window awning.

The 1896 critic of the Chemical Building who found it lacking in "impressive simplicity" also made a pronouncement about gray brick, used for the Union Trust Building:

There seems to be no better color, especially for downtown buildings, as it gives the appearance of solidity, and it is defaced less by smoke and dirt than any other color....⁶

But time has been kinder to the Chemical Building than to the Union Trust. The Chemical's red brick and terra cotta are still fresh, and its vigorously articulated facades have been far less diminished by street level alterations than Alder & Sullivan's now grimy gray skyscraper.

FOOTNOTES

¹Brickbuilder 6 (September, 1896): 177.

²One of a series of articles reporting on office operations of major Chicago architects published in the May, 1898 Inland Architect described the efficient

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operation of Cobb's two-floor office and reveals the tight control he maintained over the products of his 100 to 130 person work force. The general superintendent.. .."has supervision over all superintendents, not only in Chicago but in other cities. And all work in other cities is done by the superintendent in charge, all drawings being made in Chicago, and everything is done through the Chicago office." (Unfortunately for historians of his architecture, Cobb ordered the work of his Chicago office destroyed before his departure from New York.)

³St. Louis Builder 8 (October, 1901).

⁴Brickbuilder 6 (September, 1896): 177.

⁵St. Louis Builder 9 (July, 1902).

⁶Brickbuilder 8 (September, 1896): 177.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Granite City, IL/MO

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The Chemical Building is located in City Block 181; beginning at the northeast corner of Olive and N. Ninth Street continue approximately 125 feet east along the north side of Olive; thence turning north continue approximately 115 along the west side of the north/

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By c 1981, Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc.

name/title Jane M. Porter, Researcher and Carolyn Hewes Toft, Editor

organization Landmarks Association of St. Louis, Inc. date 18 September 1981

street & number 706 Chestnut Street, #1217 telephone (314) 421-6474

city or town St. Louis, state MO 63101

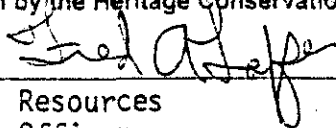
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



Director, Department of Natural Resources
title and State Historic Preservation Officer

date January 22, 1982

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

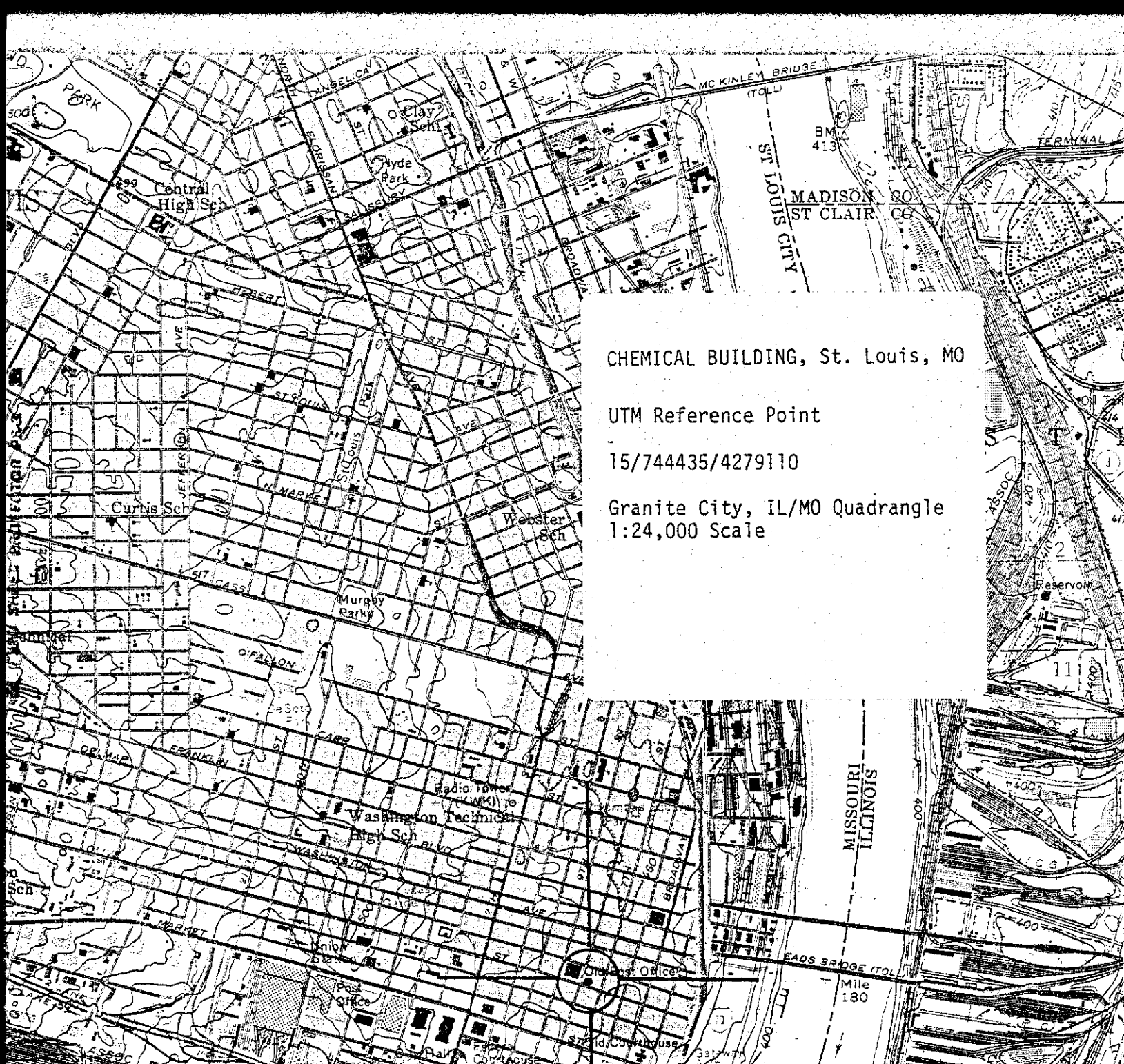
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

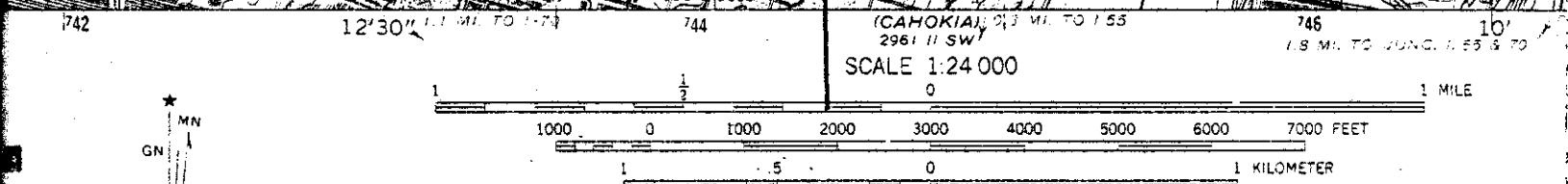


CHEMICAL BUILDING, St. Louis, MO

UTM Reference Point

15/744435/4279110

Granite City, IL/MO Quadrangle
1:24,000 Scale



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801.
AND BY THE DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ROLLA, MISSOURI 65401
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions
Survey fr
This info
Purple tin

CHEMICAL BUILDING, St. Louis, MO

#1 of 4 South and west elevations

Photographer: Unknown

Date: 1901

Photocopy from: St. Louis Builder
(October, 1901)

Negative: Landmarks Association
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing northeast.



CHEMICAL BUILDING, ST. LOUIS.
Henry Ives Cobb, Architect.

CHEMICAL BUILDING, St. Louis, MO

#2 of 4 South and west elevations

Photographer: Jill R. Johnson

Date: 1978

Negative: Landmarks Association
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing northeast.



CHEMICAL BUILDING, St. Louis, MO

#3 of 4 North and east (rear)
elevations

Photographer: Jane M. Porter

Date: September, 1981

Negative: Landmarks Association
of St. Louis, Inc.

Camera facing southwest.



THIS PICTURE MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT
PERMISSION OF THE MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

CHEMICAL BUILDING, ST. LOUIS, MO

#4 of 4 South and west elevations

Photographer: Unknown

Date: c. 1925

Negative: Missouri Historical
Society, St. Louis, MO

Camera facing northeast.



EXTRA
PHOTOS

